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RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0171
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1240
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RUEH NJ/AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA 0243
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1415
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0572
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 000877

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [ER](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: ERITREA: DETERMINED TO PLAY ON DARFUR MEDIATION

REF: ASMARA 838

Classified By: AMB Scott H. DeLisi, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Only one day after the signing of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA), Eritrea turned its attention to Darfur, meeting a National Congress Party (NCP) delegation led by Presidential Assistant Nafie ali Nafie and NCP Director of Intelligence and Security Saleh Gosh. Reports indicate that the visit was intended to begin discussions between the NCP and GSE about a Darfur mediation led by Eritrea. The DPA non-signatories in Eritrea are offering us the same message: a durable solution to the crisis in Darfur will require more discussion of wealth and power sharing, humanitarian relief, security, and compensation. They also agree that the international community will need to play a key role in the mediation. At the same time, the personalities who comprise the leadership of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM), and National Redemption Front (NRF), may make it difficult for the non-signatories to come together effectively in a mediation. The GSE remains uncertain about its next steps and is pressing the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to engage more actively to help balance NCP influence in a mediation effort. Despite the challenges, however, the GSE seems determined to be a key player in any mediation effort and looks to begin the process as soon as possible. End Summary.

ERITREA TO MEDIATE ... BUT NOT JUST YET

12. (C) While reports in the press suggest that Eritrea has actually started mediating between the NCP and DPA non-signatories; the GSE adamantly denies that any course of action on Darfur has been agreed to. In a meeting with visiting UK Khartoum Poloff and UK Ambassador on October 18, Yemane Ghebreab (the GSE's primary voice on Sudan) denied that a decision had been made on the GSE taking lead role in a Darfur mediation but reaffirmed that the GSE is willing to assist in whatever way they can to help solve

the problems of Darfur (see reftel). However, in discussions with other members of the diplomatic community, GSE officials have confirmed that they intend at least to discuss a possible mediation with each side individually to get a sense of each side's positions and the possible parameters for negotiations. In the second phase they would engage certain member of the international community and then begin an official mediation.

NCP DELEGATION RETURNS TO ASMARA WITHOUT SPLM

13. (C) Emboff was informed by Sudan contacts that an NCP delegation led by Nafie ali Nafie and Saleh Gosh visited Asmara Monday, October 16 and departed early the following day. The purpose of the visit was to follow up on a visit made just one week earlier (see reftel) which reportedly gave the GSE the green light to move ahead with a mediation between the NCP and DPA non-signatories. The Egyptian DCM as well as other Sudan sources report that the NCP and GSE engaged in preliminary discussions for a possible Eritrean led mediation. Reportedly, the NCP told the Eritreans that a new mediation cannot reopen the DPA - it can only discuss amendments to it. The NCP also reportedly told the Eritreans that the negotiations could not discuss the establishment of a Darfur region nor could they offer any additional presidential positions.

14. (C) Many believe the visit was the direct result of a request by President Isaias who, following the ESPA signing on October 14, reportedly asked both the NCP and SPLM to send delegations back to Asmara to discuss a future Eritrean-led mediation on Darfur. We are told that Isaias' meeting with the SPLM's Salva Kiir occurred after the departure of Sudanese President Al-Bashir from Asmara on October 14. Isaias reportedly told Kiir that although the GSE was intent on keeping the SPLM involved in the process, the SPLM needed to follow through on its proposals and more actively demonstrate its interest in playing a role in Darfur. Isaias cautioned Kiir that the NCP was seeking to sideline the SPLM's engagement on Darfur and could succeed in its efforts if the SPLM did not become more engaged. Isaias made it clear that the SPLM needed to send a senior-level delegation to work with the GSE on Darfur. To date, no delegation has arrived in Asmara.

DPA NON-SIGNATORIES UNITY TENUOUS AT BEST

15. (C) While a majority of the DPA non-signatories are presently in Asmara, their unity is tenuous at best. In discussions with DPA non-signatories all have highlighted concerns over security, humanitarian relief, compensation and power sharing, and they believe that these issues were not addressed adequately in the DPA. They all also emphasize that the role of international actors/observers will be critical in any renewed mediation. The non-signatories we have met with have also all publicly or privately accepted Eritrea as a mediator for possible talks and all have highlighted their desire to return to Darfur and consult with Darfurians. They diverge, however, on who the relevant stakeholders in Darfur actually are.

16. (C) The differences among the non-signatories are equally clear, however, and could threaten their ability to participate effectively in a mediation. For example, in early October, Abdulwahid al-Nur and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) representatives met with EU Special Representative for Sudan Pekka Haavisto and provided him a copy of a "Comprehensive Roadmap for Resolving the Sudanese Conflict in Darfur." The document itself, signed by the NRF and Abdulwahid for the SLM, is much more demanding in terms of power sharing and wealth sharing than they are in private discussions, and calls for more concessions from the government. Additionally, it calls for Sudan to return to the federal structure and demarcation lines of 1956. (Note: Post will forward document to AF/SPG and Khartoum. End Note).

¶17. (C) Despite this joint document, Abdulwahid al-Nur told Emboff on October 13 that his alignment with the JEM and NRF has been purely to please the Eritreans and that as soon as he is able to leave Eritrea he will denounce the JEM. He explained that he wanted to work on uniting the SLM and would not be opposed to working though problems with Ahmed Abdulshaffi. He also said he would welcome the return of Sharif Harir and Khamis Abdalla Ababr from the NRF, but was clear that he did not want JEM's Khalil Ibrahim involved. Nor did he think that the NRF's Ahmed Diraige retains any credibility in Darfur. Despite, his remarks to us on the 13th, however, Abdulwahid has, on any given day, declared his support for or alliance with any of the above and has told other interlocutors in Asmara that he is committed to the NRF, to an NRF-SLM alignment, etc.

¶18. (C) In meetings with Sharif, Emboff was told that while all the DPA non-signatories want to achieve the same goals, there is some divergence on who they want to consult with in the field. Sharif explained that he believed the NRF and Abdulwahid and Shaffi should come to a common position here in Asmara and then return to consult with the people of Darfur. He was adamant that it should not be focused on the SLM, which he believes already has split into possibly five entities. When pushed, Sharif hinted that he believed they should hold a consultative meeting in North Darfur and seemed to intimate that the key stakeholders would be the military commanders. Sharif also explained that in a recent meeting with Shaffi, the NRF commanders had called to ask Shaffi to formally join the NRF. He has declined for the moment, but agreed that they had the same goals in mind.

¶19. (C) Meanwhile, in meetings with UK colleagues, Shaffi remained firm that he does not intend on giving up his SLM allegiances to join the NRF, but confirmed Sharif's assertion that he sees common ground between the DPA non-signatories. As he did throughout July, Shaffi highlighted the need for an SLM leadership conference, acknowledging that more than one individual may come out on top. He believes this needs to be done immediately and until that happens the SLM will not be able to work with other DPA non-signatories on issues related to mediation.

CAN ABDULWAHID AND SHAFFI LEAVE ASMARA?

¶10. (C) In the October 13 meeting with Abdulwahid, he explained to Emboff that he had obtained a visa to travel to Europe and was planning on going to Paris, but when he tried to depart Asmara on October 11, the Eritreans blocked him from leaving. The EU's Haavisto told us on October 16, that he understood that Abdulwahid had attempted to depart the country again on October 14 and was again turned around. It is unclear why Abdulwahid wishes to leave Asmara now. There are a number of rumors, including wide-spread speculation that his urgency is fueled by a bribe from the NCP (or Libya) to keep him from aligning with the NRF. In any event, rumor has him seeking to travel to Paris to meet French authorities; to attend an NCP sponsored meeting in Paris between him, Minni Minawi and Khalil Ibrahim; or, even to travel on to Tripoli for a meeting with the Libyans. Abdulwahid refused to tell Emboff why he needed to leave so urgently. Meanwhile, Emboff also learned from UK colleagues, that Shaffi too has complained of being unable to depart Asmara and claims that the GSE is holding his travel documents.

COMMENT

¶11. (C) The DPA non-signatories all seem willing to at least talk about talks with the GSE and all share a common perception on the core issues for discussion. However, it seems equally clear that the personalities vying for dominance will continue to clash and will continue to get in the way of unity among the non-signatories. That said,

the Eritreans - despite their disclaimers - seem intent on playing a role in any Darfur mediation. They appear to recognize the challenges and that they may need help, including having the SPLM play a role balancing the NCP. Thus they are all the more frustrated with Kiir's seeming inability to follow through on previous proposals and discussions with the Eritreans on Darfur. The next steps remain very much uncertain. Post believes, however, that the Eritreans consider themselves to be, in essence, the designated mediator and are intent on beginning negotiations as soon as possible. End Comment.
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